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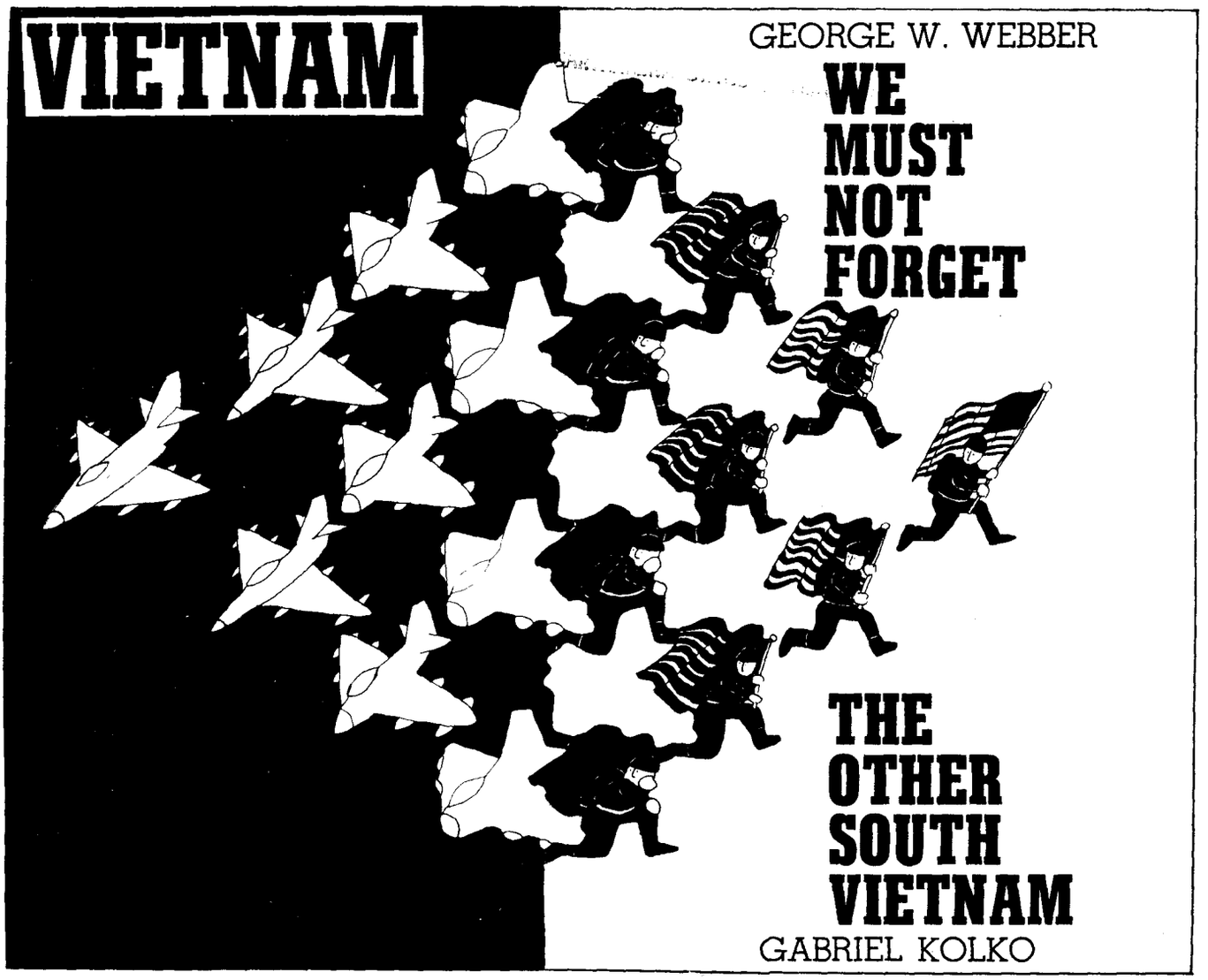
commonweal

Fiftieth Anniversary Year



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THOMAS POWERS VIETNAM NOVELS **ST[illegible] ROPP** THIS HEMISPHERE'S CANAL **GABRIEL GERSH** POPES & THE DICTATORS **TALCOTT PARSONS** A GOD WITHIN **J. DONCEEL** ERICH FROMM'S ANATOMY **PETER STEINFELS** ACTION AFFIRMATIVE

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NEWS & VIEWS

Postage Rip-Off

The postal rate increases of March 2 are hard enough to take, but, as the *New York Times* editorialized the other day, "far worse are the annual leaps in second-class rates, which have already hurried a number of magazines to oblivion and are threatening scores of others." As if having *Commonweal* specifically in mind, the *Times* added: "Especially hard hit are those small-circulation journals of religion and opinion which may well profit their readers but never their publishers."

The next second-class increase—Phase 3 in an increment schedule by which second-class mail costs will rise 145 percent over a five-year period—is scheduled for July 6. On top of the revised rate-schedule increase of March 2, it will boost second-class postage costs for 1974 at least 35 percent above 1973.

One of those earlier postal increments nudged *Life* out of existence; subsequent increments could do in scores of marginally solvent magazines like *Commonweal*.

The situation is at a crisis point. Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., addressed himself to it in the Jan. 31 *Wall Street Journal*:

"If the Postal Service continues in its present course, the consequence will soon be to call in question the wisdom of the decision to end direct Congressional control of the postal system and to deliver so vital an instrument of government to officials so contemptuous of national tradition and need. With the increasing concentration of control in television and newspapers, the magazine has become the medium par excellence for diverse opinion and specialized audiences. The magazine is the great outlet for the multitudinous energies and values of our society, the channel of communication for the particular interests in our varied national life, the means of expression for all those ideas and views that are the concern of Americans as individuals and special groups rather than as a broad, undifferentiated mass, the means of expression too for the more reflective and considered interpretations that form so essential a part of the educational process. To condemn magazines to a lingering death would be, as the Founding Fathers well understood, to weaken the foundations of the Republic. It is perhaps time to remind the ineffable Mr. Klassen [Postmaster General] that he has not been appointed the judge, jury and executioner of the nation's intellectual life."

Professor Schlesinger and the *New York Times* have both thrown weight behind a bill co-sponsored by Senators Goldwater and Kennedy that would extend the second-class phasing period for another five years, and reduce by one-third the proposed increases on the first 250,000 of a periodical's circulation.

The bill is no cure-all, but, in the words of the *Times*, it "would at least relieve the immediate pressure on all periodicals." In the long run it would undoubtedly keep scores of publications from almost certain extinction.

Renault, McClatchy Newspapers, Calif.

Retreat in Colombia

Colombian bishops have quietly pulled back on the birth control and demography issues.

Last August, media reports had the bishops preparing a document on these twin topics, one that allegedly would be open to artificial birth-control methods. *Newsweek* said the statement would be published in September.

Months passed, however, without anything appearing. Now the Permanent Secretariat of the Colombian Bishops Conference has told Latinamerica Press that it will make no declaration. At the same time, it has downgraded last summer's reports as mere "press speculation."

No reasons are offered for what seems to be a turnabout on firm intentions. The best bet is that the bishops are in flight before some intense controversy engendered by the initial reports, primarily involving the National Council of Laymen representing more than 30 Catholic organizations of Colombia.

The Council objected to new liberal stances on birth control and population, arguing that they would be contrary to the letter of *Humanae Vitae* and supportive of neo-colonialist imperialism. This opened up a heated debate with Father Alfonso Llano, S.J., the principal clerical defender of birth control in Colombia, and with groups favoring population control.

The bishops, meanwhile, maintained silence through their recent 29th Assembly, limiting themselves to an oblique observation that "fertility rates are high, although they show a tendency to decrease."

Rating Colleges

College-Rater Inc., an independent organization in Allentown, Pa., rates Notre Dame 47th among 800 of the nation's undergraduate institutions. The rating is good enough to place Notre Dame first among Catholic institutions of the country, ahead of Holy Cross (71st), Georgetown (81st), Boston College (90th), St. Louis University (97th), Catholic University (110th), Fordham University (116th).

Rated the top private institutions of the country were: Harvard, Yale, California Institute of Technology, University of Chicago, MIT, Princeton, Dartmouth, Columbia, Haverford and Swarthmore.

University of Michigan was first among public colleges and universities, followed by six campuses of the University of California and the University of Virginia.

Odds and Ends

—John Boone, former Corrections Commissioner of Massachusetts, after a recent trip to South Vietnam: "Ambassador Graham Martin in Saigon assured me that there are no political prisoners in South Vietnam. I have had similar assurances from American correctional administrators that there are no political prisoners in our nation's prisons. But my more than twenty years experience in the prison business leads me to believe that either they are lying or they don't know what a political prisoner is."

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Relevant Rhymes

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: A funny thing happened to "Sisyphus" as he was going up the hill [Jan. 25]. He says, "Somewhere run the sardonic lines:

"Are the Africans in Africa
Prepared for independence?
Can they fill the air with smog enough?
Their rivers with pollution?
Or employ enough machines
To keep employees from employment?"

Indeed they do run somewhere, namely, in the book, *Rhymes for the Irreverent* by E. Y. Harburg, famed and gifted lyricist and playwright of such shows and films as *Finian's Rainbow* and *Wizard of Oz*. Not only do they run there, but they run somewhat farther, and in somewhat different order from the version recalled by the redoubtable Sisyphus. To wit,

ON THAT GREAT CIVILIZED MORNING

Are the Africans in Africa
Prepared for independence?
Do they have enough delinquents
'Mong their juvenile descendants?

(Continued on page 46)

FUND DRIVE

This week we ask friends of *Commonweal* for help in getting our 50th Anniversary fund drive off dead-center. So far 1381 donors have contributed $23,390—a nice figure but still some distance from the $35,000 we need. Unfortunately, donations have now slowed to a trickle, and this, ironically, during the very week when new and substantial increases in both first- and second-class mail costs confront us with additional money problems. We feel sure many readers who believe in what *Commonweal* stands for have simply put off their intent to help, and we simply want to tell such friends that there will never be a better time than now to help us. Gifts of any size will be deeply appreciated.

—THE EDITORS

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HONOR IN VIETNAM

In American homes the Vietnam war is now seldom mentioned; in the Vietnamese homes and countryside, it is lived. In the last year almost 60,000 Vietnamese have died—ambushed, assassinated, blown-up in now-forgotten petty skirmishes, as outposts and crossroads changed hands, changed flags, and changed hands again. Since the so-called cease-fire, there have been 818,700 new Vietnamese refugees and, in Cambodia, 500,000 new victims of the war.

Meanwhile, the Saigon economy is in chaos: soaring prices and 20-25 percent unemployment in the cities. One woman at a market said: "The big men can take it easy. Only the citizens are dying without rice." And the precious land has been ravaged by more than our shells. According to the National Academy of Sciences, our 100 million pounds of herbicides dropped between 1961 and 1971 have destroyed crops, killed "lots" of Montagnard children and wiped out 36 percent of the mangrove swamp forests—valuable breeding grounds for fish—which will not be restored for 100 years.

Clark Clifford now argues that our man in Saigon, Premier Thieu, is the biggest obstacle to peace, to a truly representative neutral government that could negotiate an end to the fighting. Peace, says Thieu, "is territorial security, protection of the harvests, production increase, self-development. It consists of weakening the Communists, defeating them, annihilating their tax collectors, their assassination squads." In other words: winning on his own terms, despite the Paris agreements.

There is good evidence that the responsibility for the failure of the Paris agreement falls in large measure on the unquestioned alliance between our Administration and Thieu, with our government, with Thieu as a surrogate, still trying to achieve some version of the good old American "win." If that cannot be arranged, then it seems that the Administration would settle for a prolonged military stalemate, passing the political problem along to its successor. But Vietnam is more than a "political" problem which can be solved by leading the electorate to believe that as long as our boys are not dying we need not be concerned. Even Melvin Laird has confessed, now that he is no longer responsible for our policy, that the Nixon Administration should never have talked of "peace;" rather it should have admitted that the war might go on for 20 years.

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A better course would have been to tell the people that we were ending our military engagement because it was wrong and that we still had a moral obligation to enforce the Paris accords and rebuild the country we had destroyed, even at economic sacrifice to ourselves.

The major contradiction in our present policy is that we have not truly followed through on Secretary of State Kissinger's December statement that: "We have succeeded not in guaranteeing necessarily a permanent peace but in moving the decision to a Vietnamese decision." As long as the United States continues large-scale military aid to Saigon, ending the war is not a Vietnamese decision. At least eight thousand U.S. advisers accompany Saigon troops and, according to VC charges, direct them in combat. Our planes fly reconnaissance missions over the North—tempting targets for VC fire. We give Thieu over one billion dollars a year in military aid, with an additional $600 million marked for next year.

Meanwhile, Lt. William Calley, murderer of 22 helpless people, is out on bail and may even become a small-town celebrity. It sometimes seems that the American capacity for moral evasion and collective self-deception is so great that there is little chance, within the lifetime of these so-called "best and brightest" Americans most responsible for our folly, that we will face the full implications of what our pride and violence have done to this once rich and beautiful little land. That will be the task of future Presidents, professors, priests, journalists and novelists who must guide the nation through public recognition of its guilt.

For the time being, we can reinforce the voices of those Catholic bishops in Vietnam who last month called on both sides to stop fighting and release all political and civilian prisoners, and we can endorse the proposals of Senator Edward Kennedy who, in January, called on the President to "chart a new beginning" in Indochina by fulfilling our obligations less to governments and more to people—"to millions of war victims and other disadvantaged who cry out for our help." For, while we must disassociate ourselves from Thieu, we can never wash our hands of Vietnam. We made it our war over 20 years ago. We burned, bombed and left when it suited us. That is neither peace nor honor.

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KISSINGER IN PANAMA

THIS HEMISPHERE'S CANAL

That Henry Kissinger flew on February 7 to the small isthmian nation of Panama may come as something of a surprise, even to those foreign policy savants who closely follow the peripatetic exploits of our present Secretary of State. While there has been considerable talk during recent years of a new treaty to finally settle the issue of Panamanian sovereignty over the Canal Zone, few really believed that much would come of it. Yet Kissinger and Panamanian Foreign Minister Juan Antonio Tack have signed a "Joint Statement of Principles" which outlines the new approach to six basic issues that have stalled negotiations since they were renewed in 1965. The Administration's intent to take this current round seriously seems clear from the fact that elder statesman Ellsworth Bunker has been put in charge.

In view of the fact that little progress toward a new treaty has been made since the 1964 riots, one might conclude that the Kissinger-Tack agreement is just another meaningless piece of paper which holds out the promise of a solution while plastering over fundamental differences. After all, it was in 1967 that three new draft treaties were introduced to the public with great fanfare. These treaties, which were designed to deal with problems of the existing lock canal, a new sea-level canal, and certain defense matters, were quickly relegated to the pages of diplomatic history when the public in both countries became aware of their content.

There are a number of reasons, however, why the adoption of such a *déjà vu* attitude toward the present negotiations may be a little premature. Granted that the United States still holds most of the key political, military and economic trump cards, and that General Torrijos' bargaining position is in no way analogous to that of the oil-rich sheiks with whom Kissinger recently did business. Nevertheless, certain shifts in relative bargaining strength have occurred since Torrijos came to power in 1968 which may presage a more successful outcome for Panama this time around.

One critical difference between 1967 and 1974 is the pervasive presence today of Arab oil money. While the Nixon Administration's main diplomatic concern to this point has been with the crisis of oil supply, the more serious long-term threat may lie in the political and military uses to which these massive new oil funds could be put. That there may be some substance to these anxieties comes in the form of rumors to the effect that Panamanian Finance Minister Jose Guillermo Aizpu met secretly last year with Colonel Muammar Qaddafi of Libya to explore the possibility of using some of Libya's $3 billion in annual oil revenue to finance the construction of a new sea-level canal. The canal, to be jointly owned, would not only give the projected Egypt-Libya Confederation control over the world's two most strategically significant

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waterways but would also serve to symbolically rid the Arab world of the last vestiges of its colonial heritage. What better way to assert one's national independence than to build a new canal in Uncle Sam's backyard?

However, this new dimension of Panama's bargaining position may not be taken too seriously in Washington. For while one might expect Colonel Qaddafi to warm up both to the idea of a new canal and to the fellow military officer who inspires the Panamanian "Revolution," differences in character and temperament cannot be ignored. Qaddafi is a devout Moslem and thus very much of an ascetic. Torrijos, while a "model of comportment" during business hours, rewards himself liberally afterwards. It is said that the Libyan representative to the United Nations Security Council meeting held last year in Panama was less than impressed with the General's personal life-style. Also, there is the question of Torrijos' ties with the highly influential Jewish community in Panama. Not only is his wife Jewish but also some of his top advisers. The price he might have to pay in personal and political terms as concessions to the militant Qaddafi would probably be too high.

But the threat of Arab financing for a new canal is only one of the new cards that Torrijos can play in his negotiations with State Department officials. Last July, the Canadian-based Paviano Company announced the discovery of what it claims to be the world's richest copper deposit in the San Feliz district of Panama. With $14 million invested to date, Paviano officials believe that the newly discovered deposits are capable of producing 400,000 tons of first-class ore annually for a period of 80 years. This level of production would be sufficient to meet the total copper import needs of the United States at current consumption rates. And while copper is one of the strategic metals on which the United States is least externally dependent, there can be little doubt that the Nixon Administration is sensitive to such considerations in the wake of developments in Chile and the present energy crisis. A bid for an assured supply of Panamanian copper might be part of the overall strategy.

In many respects then, General Torrijos' "New Panama" is different from the earlier civilian-run version. During the past five years, there has been a six-fold increase in banking assets (up to $2.5 billion) which ranks this isthmian nation with major banking centers in Latin America. Panama is a country which has diversified its economic base to the point that the Canal has become somewhat less essential, and it is precisely this decreased reliance on the Canal which may lead to more advantageous treaty arrangements.

Seen from this perspective, Panama is in a position to engage in some hard bargaining. The United Nations Security Council meeting held last March in Panama City led to the diplomatic isolation of the United States on the Canal issue when Ambassador John Scali was forced to veto an otherwise unanimous resolution supporting the principle of Panamanian sovereignty in the Zone. Furthermore, there is much less certainty today that control of the Canal Zone is really necessary from a military point of view. The argument that we must not forget the lesson of the Cuban missile crisis when 30 warships moved through the Canal in one day has an increasingly hollow ring in this era of airmobile divisions and C5A transports.

A further consideration in assessing the outcome of future negotiations between Panama and the United States is that General Torrijos is viewed in Washington as an ideological fence-straddler who might be permanently wooed into the Western camp by a few timely concessions. Those familiar with Torrijos have made mention of his tendency to combine a personalistic political style with "ameliorative capitalism" as an economic approach. While he has toyed with various socialist measures and would surely have experimented more widely had the Panamanian oligarchy allowed him to do so, Torrijos appears to be a pragmatist who is willing to deal with the Yanquis provided that he can win on the gut issue of the Canal.

If Torrijos has been perceived by many North Americans as a radical, it is only because few have bothered to examine his social and economic programs in any depth. It is easy to be led astray by his vitriolic attacks on the State Department, which are often misinterpreted as attacks on the United States. That Torrijos is not particularly fond of the men in Foggy Bottom is attributable to the fact that the 1968 coup against President Arnulfo Arias had to be rescheduled after State Department officials informed Arias of the impending military action.

Since General Torrijos remains on quite good terms with American military commanders in the Canal Zone, it would seem more appropriate and potentially productive to have the treaty negotiations handled by the Department of Defense. However, one would still have to face the inevitable cries of "sellout" that are sure to arise from Congressional ranks. Within both Houses of Congress, there is a small but highly influential group of individuals who, in alliance with former Southern Command generals, will fight to the bitter end for preservation of this aspect of the "American Heritage."

Despite this inevitable opposition, one can remain relatively optimistic concerning the eventual outcome of Secretary Kissinger's visit and the impending negotiations. For those "Zonians" who wish to sit on the veranda of the Tivoli and relive the plantation experience of the Old South, times are changing. The Tivoli was recently torn down, and in its place may rise a new treaty edifice that will give full recognition to Panama's sovereign rights in the Canal Zone. STEVE C. ROPP

(Steve C. Ropp is an assistant professor of government at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces.)

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AFFIRMING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

PETER STEINFELS

THERE ARE several good reasons for my not writing anything at this moment about the case of Marco DeFunis, Jr. For one thing several thoughtful columns on the subject, by William Shannon and Anthony Lewis, have already appeared in the *New York Times*; others, which I have not seen, have probably appeared in papers around the country. For another thing I have not had the opportunity of reading any of the briefs, more than thirty of them, filed not only by the parties to the case, Mr. DeFunis and the University of Washington, but by concerned groups including the AFL-CIO, the Anti-Defamation League, Harvard University, the American Bar Association, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Legal Defense Fund, and so on.

Still the case has a fascination—and an importance—which I, no more than these dozens of organizations, cannot resist. In 1971 DeFunis was refused admission to the University of Washington Law School although his aptitude test scores were higher than a number of black, Chicano, and Indian applicants who were admitted. The law school had pooled the applicants from minority groups and evaluated them by more lenient standards. DeFunis sued on the grounds of reverse racial discrimination.

The Supreme Court will not hand down its decision on the DeFunis case for several months. And when it does, there is a good chance that the Court will find enough peculiarities in the University of Washington situation to settle the matter without closing down controversy on the larger issues.

Those larger issues remain, however. The first one concerns "quotas." Hardly any outspoken defenders of "quotas" are currently in sight, which is not surprising in view of the anxiety and hostility the notion has generated, whether in the area of housing, delegate selection for the Democratic national convention, or university admissions and hiring. Understood as hard-and-fast percentages allocated on the basis of race (or sex and age) and without regard to other factors, quotas are objectionable to almost everyone. But what if the percentage is not hard-and-fast but only more-or-less? What if the factor like race, sex, or age is not *the* determining factor but only one of several factors weighed in the balance?

A second issue is that of government interference in the admissions policies of universities. It is rather shocking that few of the academicians who were so vociferous in opposition to the "politicization" of the university have raised their voices on this issue. University admissions have traditionally involved factors other than academic ranking—everything from alumni connections to regional distribution to athletic needs and abilities. In the case of DeFunis, not only were some minority students with lower grades and test scores admitted ahead of him, so too were a good number of white students with lower scores. Clearly, race was not the only extra-academic matter taken into account. Must universities ignore all such characteristics and base admissions only on grades and test scores? Not all DeFunis' defenders favor such a drastic and narrow requirement; they would allow a discretionary admissions policy, but not one based in any way on race. On what principles, then, would they base this permissible discretion? How is one extra-academic factor, such as race, to be distinguished from others, such as income level, geographical or occupational background?

The third issue centers on "affirmative action." Critics of affirmative action charge that it is simply quotas by another name, and that it interferes with academic hiring and admissions policies just as seriously as would a strict determination of such matters by grades and test scores. No doubt affirmative action can be, and has been, abused in that manner. To guard against such abuses, the distinguished legal scholar Alexander Bickel has argued that affirmative action be limited to active and extended recruiting of qualified minority candidates for school or job openings; ultimately, however, only "qualifications" should determine who, out of this enlarged pool of candidates, should get the position. And race, if I read Professor Bickel right, is not to be considered in any respect whatsoever among the "qualifications."

The more I am involved in efforts to select among candidates for openings, the more convinced I am of the slippery nature of notions like "qualifications" and "merit"—and hence the more dubious I am of Professor Bickel's distinction. So many factors go into the choice of each individual, a constellation of circumstances and intangibles, including so much beyond what the individual has personally achieved or can control, that I cannot see why minority group status—as one among numerous considerations—could not come into play by way of compensation.

In any case, affirmative action seems a workable compromise. "Circumstances . . ." wrote Edmund Burke in a passage Professor Bickel likes to cite, "give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing color and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind." If ideological politics means hewing to a principle without regard for "circumstances," then those who determinedly oppose or seek to weaken affirmative action are, in this instance, the ideological politicians.

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WE MUST NOT FORGET

GEORGE W. WEBBER

An eyewitness report on South Vietnam

"If you think you understand Vietnam, you haven't been here long enough." The words were spoken by an American Mennonite missionary as a way of warning a group of five American visitors that we would need to be on our guard in seeking to understand the complex reality of this Asian country. Although none of us had set foot in Vietnam before, we had been active in the peace movement for varying periods during the years of American military engagement and had now come, on the anniversary of the signing of Paris Agreements, to seek first-hand what the prospects were for peace.

Robert Ransom, an attorney for a major U.S. corporation, had a son killed in ground combat in 1968. He made the journey in the forlorn hope that he might find now some small evidence that his son's death had not been totally in vain. Ying Kelley, a city councilwoman in Berkeley, California, Chinese by birth, brought to our group the perspective of one born in the Orient and sensitive to the problems of irresponsible use of American power. John Boone, a distinguished black American, had worked for many years in the Federal Corrections System and had been for a time Commissioner of Corrections for the State of Massachusetts. His expertise in the field of prisons and justice delivery systems was valuable in helping us analyze the problems of political prisoners and the prison system in South Vietnam. Debrah Wiley, a young woman reporter and associate editor of *American Report*, had for some years covered the events of South Vietnam and brought wide knowledge of the country to bear on our journey. I was going to be part of the group out of great fear that I, like so many Americans, would fall guilty to the amnesia that enables us to forget the tragedy we wrought in Southeast Asia and turn to other problems. Not long ago in an interview with Joseph Kraft, Secretary of State Kissinger said, only partly in jest, "I hope I never have to think about Vietnam again." The temptation to forget is great indeed, but I knew that South Vietnam was in tremendous trouble for which America must take responsibility.

Two weeks is a brief time indeed, but we were given tremendous support by a variety of persons who arranged a schedule which began in the early morning and continued with hardly an interruption until midnight curfew. Our plan was simple—we would try to be inconspicuous, coming as tourists and staying in separate hotels, to see as much as possible without interference. During the first week we would talk to as many Vietnamese citizens as possible, to ex-prisoners, relatives of prisoners and others who face some risk by conversing with us. Two members of the party traveled north to Quang Tri, Hue, Danang, and the surrounding countryside. The other three journeyed to Can Tho in the delta west from Saigon, nearly to Cambodia, and to resettlement villages along the coast. During this first week we talked, often covertly, with nearly a hundred men and women. At the beginning of our second week we contacted the American Embassy and talked with government officials, both United States and when possible with Vietnamese. My purpose here is not so much to analyze or to provide possible solutions, but simply to report what we were told by Vietnamese whose integrity and insight we affirm and whose cour-

REVEREND GEORGE W. WEBBER, *president of New York Theological Seminary, is the author of* God's Colony in Man's World *(Abingdon Press, 1960).*

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age and fortitude inspired us. The voices of Vietnam served to destroy four myths which people in the United States have used to interpret the situation of Vietnam and which by their distortion of reality tend to confuse our perceptions and defeat our solutions.

Myth #1: The United States is achieving peace with honor. In a lengthy conversation with the United States Ambassador, Mr. Graham Martin, he voiced his fervent prayer and honest conviction that when America is finally finished with South Vietnam several years hence, we will be able to say that in spite of all its tragedies, "We came out all right." The fact is that there is neither peace for the Vietnamese nor honor for the United States. The war is at this moment intensifying. In the course of the twelve months after the signing of the Paris Accords in January 1973, the number of casualties, dead and wounded, continued at about the same figure as during the previous year of fighting. We heard the artillery at night, saw missiles fired by day, and watched bombers take off on their missions. There are troops everywhere in the country, guards at every bridge, with nearly one of every four males over age 14 in the army, and the numbers being drafted is increasing steadily. The impression exists in the United States that the aggressive actions of the past year have been largely the responsibility of the "Vietcong." In every conversation with Vietnamese in the cities and countryside we probed this question. We asked newspaper reporters about it, and, with the exception of American officials, the answer seemed quite clear—that the responsibility for the escalation of the fighting and the continuation of the military struggle lies primarily in the hands of the Thieu regime.

If one looks at the Paris Accords one would hardly expect anything different. The Thieu regime was required by the agreements of Paris to seek a *modus vivendi* with the Provisional Revolutionary Government which at the time of the Paris Accords controlled approximately two-thirds of the land area of South Vietnam, while the Thieu regime controlled two-thirds of the population. The pressure upon the Thieu government is to expand into PRG territory, to extend its control into areas that are now firmly in the hands of the NLF and, of course, to continue the control of the population to maintain its dictatorship. There is also no peace for the million people presently classified as refugees and the hundreds of thousands more who have been driven from their farmland into the cities and who long for an opportunity to return to their villages and land.

There is no honor for the United States. The Paris Accords meant the end of overt military engagement of our soldiers and air force and the return of our prisoners of war. But as the Vietnamese said again and again, we are responsible for maintaining in power the oppressive military dictatorship of the Thieu regime and providing the military hardware which enables the war to continue. During our last morning in Saigon we talked with Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh, the brilliant woman attorney who has been offered several professorships in the U.S., but has determined to remain in her own country and continue the struggle against the military regime. Her point to us was quite simple—please ask your government to adhere to the agreement they signed in Paris. The United States signed a treaty which was to bring peace—a political solution—to Vietnam and which affirmed the right of the PRG to coexist along with the other South Vietnamese government and a neutralist third element. The United States, she reminded us, signed that agreement and is a partner to the determination that those agreements become a reality. If the United States government lived up to its responsibilities under that agreement and forced its puppet state, the Thieu government, to maintain them, then there might be an authentic possibility for peace.

There is no honor in the horrendous dislocation of the Vietnamese by the massive intrusion of American military power, by the support of forced movement of people from their land and by the introduction of the elements of our society that have brought chaos to a lovely agrarian society in which family ties have deep and profound meaning. We have left the country littered with our garbage, the unexploded ordnance which continues to maim and kill; children are on the streets and in the orphanages, many with living parents who are unable to support them; the prostitutes can find no easy return to Vietnamese life; the countryside is scarred; inflation is soaring; and the desperate hunger and torture of those in prison continues. It is our taxes which continue to maintain this military state whose interest in ending the war and binding up the wounds is not apparent.

Myth #2: Communism is the enemy in Vietnam. For two generations Americans have defined the problem in Southeast Asia as a desperate struggle against the forces of worldwide Communist aggression. Many of the Americans who lost their lives there, including the son of the present American Ambassador, died out of a deep conviction of the necessity and rightness of what they were about. How could America have continued so long if many had not thought that however difficult the job, it was one that was a responsibility we could not avoid and laid upon us by the need to defend the free world?

What is shocking now, however, after the détente with Russia and China has made the rhetoric of the cold war no longer so plausible, is that the representative of the American government in Saigon affirms the pure-bred cold war doctrine with no ambiguity: We are defending the people of Vietnam against the threat of Communism, and about this we should have no doubt. It is my conviction, after both conversation and

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study, that it is a total misreading of history to see this as a conflict between Communism and democracy, between the repression of a Marxist state and a free society. The struggle in Vietnam, throughout this century, has been one of the Vietnamese people against the colonial powers and economic imperialism—seeking the right of self-determination. The Vietnamese first struggled against the French, then the Japanese, then against the French and now against the United States. The crucial thread to an historical understanding of this country is the attempt to gain independence. It is of course true that the DRV and PRG operate with a strong Socialist ideology, but in a unique way that has been grafted onto the authentic values of Vietnamese family society in a way that has created the strength to stand over against the most powerful military machine in the history of the world. An American once assigned by our government to discover why the NLF could fight so effectively described the impact upon him of his hundreds of interviews with captured NLF soldiers. His conclusion was to confess the tragedy

of American involvement and the failure of our understanding of this country. The NLF were fighting for their country against the imperialists. A Vietnamese reminded me that shortly after World War II the Vietnamese sought to prevent the French from returning to replace the Japanese. In one major battle Ho Chi Minh fought with the Vietnamese people against the French while Thieu was fighting with the French soldiers. "Who," said the Vietnamese, "is the authentic Nationalist? Who believes in his country?"

Certainly, in his dependence upon American money for arms and food, Thieu continues to be sustained by the power of western governments. Economists also indicated that South Vietnam is more open to the exploitation of western corporations than perhaps any other country in the world. Oil rights, fishing, exploitation of the port of Cam Ranh Bay are only initial illustrations of the way in which foreign enterprise has been given free reign in securing the resources of the country and in particular, gaining access to an abundant cheap labor supply. One footnote to the overall tragedy is in the matter of fishing. The Vietnamese coast has been rich in shrimp and fish; the abundant supply of labor with fishermen using their own small boats has been able to provide much of the country with seafood as an addition to the basic rice diet. Now, Japanese fishing boats using heavy equipment are able to dredge and net vast seacoast areas without needing more than a miniscule part of the traditional labor force, and may also within a few years virtually destroy the fishing in a large section of the country. The struggle of the Vietnamese people is fundamentally a struggle against economic and political domination.

Myth #3: The Thieu government is on the way to democracy and is about the best one could expect, given the fact that they are not the inheritors of 2,000 years of western civilization and heirs of the Magna Carta and the traditions of democracy. Illustrations to the contrary are everywhere. There are no free elections. Thieu has recently extended his term of office and a number of political parties have been banned. There are no indications the regime will grow less repressive in the years ahead. Any kind of dissent or opposition of substance is cruelly repressed. Opposition to the regime or any attempt to find an alternative is viewed as treasonable and subject to imprisonment and torture. There are grossly oppressive governments in many parts of the world, but I suspect that the unique family dependence in Vietnam creates a particularly vicious situation. For example, if a husband in the army, no longer able to face the miseries he must oversee at the prison at Con Son, finally deserts, his wife will almost certainly be picked up and imprisoned. Initially (and I now refer to an actual case), she was tortured for three weeks and then served 18 months in jail, released only after her husband had been recaptured. When a prisoner is released from incarceration it is customary for his or her family to sign pledges guaranteeing themselves as hostages for the ex-prisoner's good behavior. Once released from prison there is no such thing as the termination of parole; rather the ex-prisoner must report at least monthly for years on end. Since there are four or five million males over the age of 14 in South Vietnam, it is estimated that 1,100,000 are in the army, another 300,000 are in the police, several hundred thousand more are ex-prisoners; meaning that some 2/3 of the men in the country are controlled by the present government.

For me, the greatest denial of freedom and democracy comes in the justice delivery system. It is still shocking to hear that torture is automatic upon arrest, lasting for 3 or 4 weeks on a daily basis. It is easier to be guilty and confess than to be innocent and be tortured, as one policeman said to me, "until you become guilty." I had read all the reports out of South Vietnam about torture and about prisons, but it is still painful to sit hour after hour and listen to ex-prisoners describe the treatment they received not only through the torture but through the maltreatment that is normative in all prison

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set-ups. The food allowance is limited in many situations to two small bowls of rice a day, the tiger cages are a reality, the courts provide a mockery of any kind of trial or justice, and there are no guarantees that an initial sentence will, upon completion, lead to release. At this point there is no way of being sure about how many prisoners there are in the country. The United States Ambassador and the Thieu government say that there are perhaps 35,000 prisoners of *all* categories, mostly common criminals. Knowledgeable Vietnamese who are careful students of the prison situation and have direct contacts through relatives and ex-prisoners into most of the prisons in the country, are convinced that there are at least 200,000 political prisoners. That is, in prison primarily because they, in some way or another, have *expressed opposition or less than total loyalty to the* present government. Students are still arrested if they hold a meeting to talk about alternatives to war or if they are found with peace propaganda in their rooms. A journalist was recently arrested for translating American government documents into Vietnamese. A Buddhist leader, shortly after the signing of the Paris Accords, translated the agreement into Vietnamese, mimeographed copies, and sent his monks out to distribute it in the countryside. He was threatened with imprisonment if he did not desist at once. Incidentally this happened at the time when the PRG radio was broadcasting the text of the Paris agreement around the clock for three days so that it would be known throughout the countryside.

The Thieu government can only grow more repressive. It is made possible by our taxes which provide 80 percent of its total budget.

Myth #4: South Vietnam desperately needs our continuing financial support. The one question I asked again and again was: "What kind of violence, what kind of bloodbath might emerge if American military support was suddenly withdrawn and the Thieu government toppled?" And as a corollary to this, "What kind of starvation and misery would you face if American relief and development aid were also withdrawn?" The response from the people with whom we talked was invariably the same, a desperate plea that we tell our Congress and the American people to withdraw all American financial aid, both military and for various aid projects. They said that whatever might ensue could not possibly be as brutal as the present violence and repression they face daily; and the hunger and suffering that might be entailed would be short-lived if they could return to their fields. This is a rich agricultural country; they have always been able to feed themselves. Though they might face several months of dislocation and suffering, Vietnam can only hope for peace and a hopeful future with the complete withdrawal of the United States government and all its resources—and then a political struggle could take place. This response was confirmed by many of the Americans with whom we talked, particularly those who sensed the strong bonds of family and tradition that bind North and South together and who believe that there are resources within the country to find a political solution that will be viable over the long run. A westerner sent to Vietnam with the purpose of determining how financial aid could be made available to the people of GVN areas of South Vietnam from his own country, was desperately trying to find some way in which funds and relief could be sent in that would not be ripped off through the patterns of corruption that are so rampant in the Thieu government.

The use of economic and military power to impose one's own values and sense of what is right upon another nation is always a pretentious and sinful business. For too long now America, with a sense of *noblesse oblige* and responsibility, has sought to force Vietnamese people *to live up to what America thought was best for them.* The pretentiousness of these claims is now clear. It is now time for all American people to accept the guilt for our destruction of Vietnam and make amends for the tragedy we have wrought by seeing that our government withdraws from this foolish and impossible effort to wring out of the tragedy some self-satisfaction.

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NINA SANDRICH

Apricots, Orchards And Things With Wings

In our orchard
apricots unharvested,
fallen to earth,
intoxicate air.
Besotted wasps,
invading realms of rottenness,
have quite forgotten
they possess
retaliatory stings.
You say it's safe to wander there;
you mock at my mistrust.
But answer this —
does inevitable decay
evoke depravity?
or do such enervating passions
follow indolence of ours?
No emanation
reels the mind
exactly
like an insect orgy
in an orchard
where abandoned apricots
spoil in squalor
and intimidating wasps,
innocuous now,
celebrate split legacies
of indifference and disgust.

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THE OTHER SOUTH VIETNAM

GABRIEL KOLKO

The dynamics of reconstruction and victory

Quang Tri province is the most heavily bombed area in South Vietnam, and the awesome vision of its devastation is surpassed only by the extraordinary pace of reconstruction now well advanced there. For in Quang Tri one may see the triumph of one nation's will and capacity to survive and rebuild over another's intent to destroy it. Indeed, Quang Tri is a microcosm of the Provisional Revolutionary Government's present strategy of not only rebuilding a pulverized nation but also of welding together the existing political, economic and military realities in South Vietnam in a manner that is certain to produce its ultimate victory in a war that is increasingly moving from military to social confrontations between itself and the Saigon puppet regime.

The unimaginable magnitude of the destruction of Quang Tri province, which borders the 17th parallel, defies written descriptions. But to slight the prodigious repairs imposed on the broken physical objects, or the confidence of the people of the region, is also to distort the dynamics that will decide the outcome of the present struggle for mastery in South Vietnam. For barbarism is not tantamount to military or political victory in revolutionary warfare, and the U.S. is now learning the meaning of this truism in South Vietnam.

Quang Tri province was virtually physically demolished, and endless numbers of bomb craters, smashed houses, broken roads, immense stretches without a single tree, and diverse litter of war constantly assault one's eyes. The town of Dong Ha, which once had 40,000 inhabitants, was left in total rubble by U.S. aircraft only two days before the Paris Accords went into effect, but the province's population is still about 300,000—with 85 percent of it under PRG administration since spring 1972. Decades earlier, however, the normally poor province had been a bastion of Vietminh strength, and during the Johnson Administration the region stretching north of Dong Ha to the 17th parallel was made a free-fire zone in which the famous "McNamara line," the epitome of electronic, automated warfare, had been installed in the hope of stopping movement across the demilitarized zone.

All roads and bridges had been smashed, but now they were repaired and in full use—even if very bumpy. The land had been largely abandoned in the decade before 1972, but today about 10,000 hectares—two-thirds of it rice—is being cultivated. In February 1973, during the Tet festival, the PRG at great effort imported the traditional holiday necessities. Today, an abundance of food and tobacco—including meat and sugar—can be purchased in the Dong Ha market, and local authorities expect soon to have a significant surplus for export. One sees none of the unmistakable signs of insufficient diet so common in India.

Nearly all of the province's 60,000 water buffalo and oxen were destroyed during the war, but today one may see many new tractors assisting the replenished animal stock, and there are so many trucks for transport that traffic congestion is now a minor problem. To fuel them, a second oil pipeline from North Vietnam is now being installed. And to keep the large quantities of new machinery in good order, a repair complex containing modern equipment was opened near Dong Ha at the end of December.

But the U.S. could not destroy non-existent facilities, such as schools and hospitals. The province is full of children, yet only one in forty of the population went to school a decade ago. Today one person of every three and one-half is enrolled in the 98 primary and secondary schools—plus evening courses for adults—that villagers have constructed for themselves out of bits and pieces of lumber or dismantled American bases. Some type of medical facility and treatment, once the exclusive privilege of the affluent, has been extended to two-thirds of the hamlets, and all the towns have clinics. The new Dong Ha hospital already has 100 beds and even produces some of its own drugs. Despite the relative insufficiency of existing facilities, over one of every three persons in the province received medical attention during the year after Quang Tri's liberation in spring 1972, and there were no epidemics during last autumn's devastating floods. The young teachers and doctors I met were dedicated and competent, and their high spirits reflected in their students I frequently encountered. Their élan has meant not merely reconstruction but development where nothing had hitherto existed.

Housing is still a long way from pre-1972 standards, and only a few original buildings in Dong Ha retain even a usable room. One coastal town of 6500 people

GABRIEL KOLKO, *the author of* The Limits of Power *(Harper & Row)* and The Politics of War *(Random House), recently returned from a trip to Vietnam.*

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I visited had twice been razed entirely, and north of Dong Ha scarcely an intact house can be seen. Still, everyone has a roof, if only a temporary one, and many new homes are being built of local materials. Not only has a mechanized sawmill been constructed near Dong Ha, but all sorts of functional, if unsightly, building materials have been taken from the vast military complexes from which the Liberation Army drove U.S. and Saigon forces in the spring of 1972. A permanent new market, shopping center, and even an ice cream parlor are already operating in Dong Ha, with a large restaurant about to open—in addition to repaired older stores.

The biggest of the former American military complexes, the Ai Tu air base, is a gargantuan skeleton of broken steel which contained immense quantities of equipment and presents a vision that defies the imagination. Liberation Army officers told me that they had been astounded by the quantity and variety of usable goods, including about 1000 operating vehicles, left behind. American bombers later returned and transformed much of Ai Tu, the critical Camp Carroll artillery base, and the central points of the McNamara Line, into scrap —but not before substantial equipment, including 175-mm artillery, was removed to safety. Even now these expensive cenotaphs to the victory of inspired revolutionaries over a surrealist technology provide much building material, and there is such an abundance of electric wire that the peasants weave colorful market baskets from it and utilize it in construction.

Added to what American and Saigon forces abandoned are large quantities of their destroyed tanks, armored cars (I counted seven of these at one spot only), and trucks one sees everywhere. At the allegedly impregnable command post of the McNamara Line, surrounded by fields of electrified barbed wires, sensors, mines, and devices leading into computer-directed artillery, the silent bunkers now house chickens fattening themselves midst the old beer cans and litter of war the Americans left behind.

The irony of this awesome pile of defeated U.S. equipment providing housing materials or baskets for reconstruction is carried yet further, as the American defeat in war today helps the defeat of the Saigon administration in conditions of tenuous peace in Quang Tri. The bustling Dong Ha port, with dozens of large lighters bringing equipment in from yet larger freighters moored at the opening of the port on the sea, was originally built to take U.S. landing-craft. Now National Liberation Front boats, many with new Russian motors, are efficiently unloading materials for reconstruction.

The dynamism and spirit of the people of Quang Tri, whether peasants or leaders, as well as their keen sense of organization and their accomplishments to date, quickly justifies their total confidence that they can and will master the problems of reconstruction. Everywhere I met children who had lost one or both parents, but were now in school and cared for; men and women, often the large majority of their village, who had been bombed, tortured, imprisoned, and tormented in so many ways, but who were now restoring their homes, measurably improving their own welfare, and fiercely proud of all they had mastered—as well as what they would yet do if renewed war demanded.

Building a Revolutionary Elan

In this mood, the relation of the people to leaders to whom I was introduced was critical in explaining the extraordinary élan in the PRG. Their clothing was identical, their faces and hands equally warm and rough. The head of the PRG in Quang Tri, a veteran of many decades of struggle, refused to remove his office from a wholly insufficient, confined cellar to a better room until the local population first had adequate housing. In one of the poorest villages I was welcomed by the local PRG council to their office—a small and significantly more modest hut than any other I saw in the village. And the deference of its chairman to the sufferings of his fellows, including a young mother of three who had been tortured and also participated in mining seven tanks, was both genuine and simple. The people, he insisted were now the masters, and the PRG was encouraging this belief to sustain a high political culture and dedication—and this, I could see, meant self-abnegation by NLF cadres. People and cadres had an obvious mutual confidence and respect.

The vice-chairwoman of the province NLF was no less striking: a veteran of long struggle and an ardent feminist, she also persisted in working in the rice fields a significant portion of each month. When I pressed several especially striking personalities to explain their accomplishments, as in the case of the tank-destroying mother, I was always reminded that both their sufferings and their deeds were much less than those of many others in the region. This instinctive sense of community with the fate of others revealed a great deal about the success of the NLF.

Despite the already great economic successes the PRG had attained in the province, largely due to its own labor and ingenuity but also with significant aid from North Vietnam and the socialist nations, the most important and far-reaching accomplishment has been to create a political and cultural revolution among the people, particularly the youth. This transformation is irreversible.

Since all children are now in school, the revolution has sunk deep roots among those previously allowed to scavenge, forced to service American and Saigon troops in the brothels and vice centers of the province, and driven into concentration camps. The young people have the greatest élan of all, and it is expressed in their daily music and poetry. These deal with the

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organic themes and experiences of their lives: departure of loved ones for the front, sacrifices, and traditional amorous concerns. What is most astonishing is the extent to which random youth whom I often encountered would sing or recite remarkably long poetry, usually for their own pleasure and by themselves. Such manifestations of a deeply indigenous mass culture were as spontaneous as they were impressive.

Organized cultural groups also exist, and each village has at least one, but they are all amateur in concept if not quality. A small troupe of guerrillas from the Gio Linh area—a dozen in all—put on a performance to a packed house in Dong Ha one evening. They were primarily fighters who for some years had gone into hamlets to put on plays in the medieval "Everyman" tradition, but adjusted to the hell the U.S. was imposing on villagers. They also sang and recited beautifully, and were clearly very talented artists who had found their form of expression highly effective among the people, and that night I noticed some older veterans in tears—which revealed the efficacy of dramatic forms over stale prose. The little troupe, too, had their own dead and wounded to remember, for they travelled more encumbered and vulnerable than was wise for guerrillas. They were but one of many examples of a successful effort to intensify communication and unity among the people by articulating and sharing a common experience via a poetic and dramatic culture deeply rooted in the Vietnamese heritage.

In the rapport between the NLF and the people, in the élan of the youth, in the modest heroism and sacrifices of women and men—in all these foundations and much else one discovers the roots of the NLF's success and the reasons for its durability under all conditions.

There is no substitute for seeing and sensing the life and strength of a whole region openly administered by the PRG finally to comprehend its organic power in Vietnam and the reasons it prevailed in the past and is certain to triumph in all the South in the future. The PRG's strategy is thereby clarified for the outsider who is exposed to its real dynamics in a manner that words and pictures hitherto never fully conveyed.

The fact is that the NLF has always been a political movement which has subtly merged indivisible political and military action in a complementary fashion in which combat without careful political preparation is eschewed. The U.S. or Saigon's doctrine of "control," in which a population's political loyalties are considered extraneous so long as their bodies are within the reach of a gun, is precisely the reverse of the classic NLF priority until this day. Were the American computerized statistics on "control" even remotely valid, the NLF would have been destroyed a decade ago. Political loyalties are primary, formal administration and "control" secondary, over the long-run.

The NLF's merger of political and military struggle has been its keystone in the past and will continue into the future, with even greater emphasis being given in the coming period to work among Saigon troops. While in the PRG I had two opportunities to test the efficacy of this strategy, as well as learn more that would justify it.

It is quite obvious that after over a decade of intensive war the overwhelming desire of the mass of South Vietnamese is to attain peace, a condition for which the 1.1 million-man Thieu armed forces are not equipped. This categorical imperative, regardless of the original ideological view, if any, of a Vietnamese, is now dominant. It is especially true among families, which for this reason have become important centers for political education around the themes of peace and national—and thereby personal—reconciliation. At the same time, many of Thieu's soldiers are in an impossible dilemma. They have no peacetime job to which to return, and they are occupational misfits; but with the rampant inflation in the Saigon economy the life of a soldier is also increasingly unbearable.

I met one group of a dozen recent Saigon deserters,

four of whom were from the Mekong Delta and the remainder from Quang Tri province. They were not guarded nor confined by a fence, and their ideological reasons for deserting were, at best, tertiary. All claimed to have been drafted against their will, and this seemed true perhaps save in one case, and all were of peasant origin. The PRG officers clearly did not regard any as promising material for their army, and later I met several other Saigon deserters who had already resumed normal lives in their villages.

Their most important single reason for desertion was the growing inflation in the Thieu economy and the insufficiency of their wages to buy even food. As one veteran put it, his monthly salary in 1973 was adequate to buy only 10 days worth of food, and when I pressed him as to how he ate the remaining time he was uncomfortably evasive. His officers, he noted, were scavenging off their troops and the population even more than before. Life back in his village was much better. Moreover, this justification was related

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to the next most frequent reason: a desire to return to one's family. And since the PRG has gone to special lengths to assure that families with sons in the Saigon army are not discriminated against, returning home is all the more enticing. All agreed that there was a general consensus among Thieu's troops, including officers, that sooner or later U.S. aid to Thieu would end and their fortunes would sink accordingly. In unison with rejoining their families, the growing collapse of the Thieu economy is now profoundly affecting the military as well as political balance-of-forces between the PRG and Saigon-areas.

The Saigon deserters also confirmed a crucial fact that also came from wholly independent PRG sources: Thieu's troops were making local accommodations with the Liberation forces, avoiding combat where possible. Their martial posture depends largely on their officers' presence, but even these officers and various elite units are losing heart. Quang Tri province is 85 percent under PRG physical domination, and I saw Saigon and PRG flags side-by-side only near Quang Tri city. There are 50 such points where opposing troops meet, and at 21 highly formalized local accommodations have been reached in just one year—including extensive fraternization to the point that films and dramatic troupes are sent to perform for the Saigonese, trade is carried on, and even medical aid and food were given to the Saigon forces during last autumn's floods. Desertion is therefore also increasing.

This strategy of reconciliation, which the Paris Accords nominally legitimizes, illustrates a legal political offensive by the PRG which will doom the Thieu regime throughout South Vietnam as inexorably as any other factor. Ironically, the deepening economic demise of the Thieu economy has accelerated the results obtained in this new phase of the NLF's political struggle. Improving the economic and social conditions of people in regions such as Quang Tri only increases their magnetic attraction in a peace for which Thieu is wholly unprepared. Yet, at the same time, the quantity and quality of military equipment one casually sees while traveling through Quang Tri, including much captured U.S. artillery, makes it clear that Thieu cannot survive militarily should he pursue that option much longer. Either way, one concludes that the PRG remains the justifiably confident master of the political and social trends that will define the final outcome of the Vietnam war, its work being increasingly eased by the irredeemable economic crisis Thieu's venality has brought about.

It is no secret, as the *Pentagon Papers* admitted, that the NLF's survival and eventual supremacy over the most powerful industrial nation in history was due to its doctrine of preserving its strategic offensive initiative, mobility and decentralization—a combination which allowed it to select the point of battle at such times and circumstances as favored its chances for success. The Vietnamese themselves stress the political dimension of this initiative, and its essential contribution to military successes, though in fact there was never a real contest on this level, but only a process of broadening a political base against scarcely any opponents at all.

It is this political triumph, and the depth to which it penetrates into every crevice and the very heart of a nation's values and commitments, that emerges most vividly as one moves about a province of 300,000 people under a unified PRG authority. Its economic progress is formidable, even monumental, in light of the extraordinary devastation of every standing physical object. Yet its very survival and accomplishments are due to its political strength and its profound interaction with a heroic people who have made the existence of the NLF, much less its present mastery of all the elements that will decide the final outcome of the Vietnam war, the most significant assertion of the capacity of humanity—one grounded on clarity and people's needs as well as heroism—to triumph over the worst adversities inflicted on any society in modern history.

KATHLEEN ELLEN JENNINGS

Moratorium

Something was winging
and, winging, dropped;

something ruthless had been
vicious and dead bent on

mending; but in that quick
month when, drowsing, we were

warm, and ate well, when we
had swelled our wheat and lay

fallow under cold sun, thinking
our work done: then mending

ended. Then something was
dropped at zenith: a shot,

and winging stopped. Shocked
grave then, our eye the grey

of the gun, we drowsed deeper
under a cold sun: stunned,

we lost will and slept;
and are sleeping still.

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THOMAS POWERS

VIETNAM IN FICTION

Sand in the Wind
ROBERT ROTH
Atlantic-Little, Brown, $8.95

Body Count
WILLIAM TURNER HUGGETT
Putnam's, $7.95

Easy Victories
JAMES TROWBRIDGE
Houghton Mifflin, $5.95

WINSTON CHURCHILL once wrote there is nothing so exhilarating as being shot at without effect and the authors of these three novels apparently found that to be true even in Vietnam. The discovery seems to have confused them. The last thing they expected was to be left with mixed feelings and as a result they do not know what to make of the whole experience. If it were possible to winnow the war from the politics which shaped it they would have found it easier to know what to think, and might have written novels with a sharper focus. At the very least they would have written the "war" novels they intended rather than "Vietnam" novels. But reality proved intractable; "war" and "Vietnam" were a muddle in fact and they keep getting mixed up in these books, too, giving the reader a vivid but artistically confused sense of what the actual, bitter experience was like to live through.

James Trowbridge (the pseudonym of a "former counterintelligence officer," according to the dust jacket), Robert Roth and William Turner Huggett could all write sharp and incisive papers on why the U.S. military killed to so little effect in Vietnam, and to some extent they have, but that doesn't seem to be what they had in mind when they sat down to write. Their deepest and strongest feelings about Vietnam were not political, after all, but personal. It is no small thing to kill a man or to be wounded in combat. Certainly Hemingway never forgot his wound on the Italian front in World War I and he is even said to have reread *A Farewell to Arms* every year on the anniversary of his near-death. Like Hemingway, these three young men wanted to capture what they saw, did and felt but in their case politics keeps intruding. What they know in the abstract keeps getting in the way of what they personally experienced.

THOMAS POWERS *received the Pulitzer Prize for national reporting in 1971. He is the author of* The War at Home *(Grossman), a history of the opposition to the war in Vietnam.*

What we have as a result are three imperfectly conceived but consistently interesting and in parts very good novels which ought to be required reading for Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk, Walter Rostow, McGeorge Bundy and a few other people who committed the country to war but do not appear to dwell on the suffering which followed. At this late date presumably we (if not they) all know the American war was a ghastly mistake, doomed to failure from the beginning, but if that knowledge has remained abstract or lacking in emotional conviction, these novels will make it concrete and real.

Sand in the Wind and *Body Count* are long, solid, conventional, at points almost interchangeable books about Marines in combat in the northern provinces of South Vietnam. Both have plenty of narrative drive and are packed with detail about Claymore mines, how to set up a listening post, the price of cyclo-girls ($50 for 18 men), which Vietcong weapon makes the best souvenir (the SKS semi-automatic rifle), Marine slang and so on. In both books there is an Indian named Chief, in both there are intelligent young lieutenants in conflict with company commanders who pay more attention to their careers than to their men. In both the Vietnamese have walk-on roles as whores or bids selling cans of sodapop. Very occasionally we see the actual enemy. All of them are called gooks and one black infantryman in *Body Count* explains Vietnamese ethnography to a colleague in the following manner: "Them is bad gooks, but these gooks aroun' heahr is gooks, too, only de'da good gooks."

Good and bad, the gooks get killed in large numbers. They also kill many of the characters in both books, most of them with booby-traps. One minute *Sand in the Wind's* Chief is feeling his way along a trail out in the middle of nowhere and the next he's lying on the ground cut in two. In both books, too (and in Trowbridge's as well), we come across dead Americans with their severed genitals stuffed into their mouths. This is something that I, for one, do not remember reading about before, but no doubt there is a reference to it somewhere in *The New York Times* Index.

Everything in *Sand in the Wind* (a bad title which Roth seems to have come up with at the last minute) is familiar in its way but Roth is a fine writer with a real talent for narrative, for creating character, for dialog and for a kind of fevered humor which lends conviction to episodes of otherwise incredible horror. In one brilliant, chilling scene a squad of Marines, famished after two days of marching without any food, finds the charred still warm body of a Vietcong killed by an American napalm strike. One of the men suggests a pause for lunch, intending only to make a joke, but the momentum of his eagerness to shock carries him forward. When no one protests he slices off a chunk, takes a bite, chews thoughtfully, and says, "Damn tough, but not bad. Not bad at all."

Soon others are trying it too and there is a good deal of macabre kidding. "Light or dark?" "Yellow, please." One Marine explains his lack of inhibition by saying, "I once had a pet duck, and I eat duck all the time." The scene is

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incredible and convincing at the same time. The torso of the dead Vietcong looks like a huge roast; the men are hungry; there is no one watching and, with two exceptions, they shrug and go ahead. The guilt and horror settle in only later, when their fierce refusal to speak or think about the incident gives them a sense of what has happened. It is a brilliant demonstration of the way men at war allow human reasons to persuade them to do inhuman things.

In sections like this *Sand in the Wind* has great force and vigor but the book as a whole wanders in too many directions at once. It jumps confusingly from one character's mind to another's. It starts and ends arbitrarily, like the 13-month tour of Marines who enter and leave the war in the middle. Huggett's book, *Body Count*, is better organized in some ways but it, too, tells us a lot of fragmented things about war in general and this war in particular, like a briefing officer ticking off points.

Boot camp is inhuman but effective. Tick. Combat is exciting. Tick. It is easy to hate the enemy. Tick. Reliance on firepower means heavy civilian casualties. Tick. "Our" Vietnamese have mixed feelings when they see Americans kill "their" Vietnamese. Tick. You can't kill the enemy if you don't know who he is. Tick. And so on. It's all there, everything that McNamara, Rusk, Rostow and Bundy ought to have known, but didn't.

Easy Victories is a book of an entirely different sort, shorter, neater and technically more sophisticated. Like *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene, still the best Vietnam novel by far, *Easy Victories* is about the American inability to comprehend the politics and culture of the country in whose affairs it is meddling, a kind of short course *Fire in the Lake*. Greene's American retains something of innocence but Trowbridge's Knox, the ambassador's son, is callous, self-serving, corrupt and cruel, so long as it is safe to be cruel. He is in Vietnam solely in order to advance his career. As a State Department attaché helping to run Operation Phoenix and other "intelligence" programs, Knox is involved in a routine brutality which makes the violence of combat seem clean and decent by comparison. A bullet behind the ear may not leave much blood, but it chills the heart in a way that a death in honest battle cannot.

There is one terrible scene, for example, in which a group of intelligence officers are trying to decide whether it is safe to murder a Cambodian agent named Khiem who had been taking American money to run a phony intelligence operation. Khiem's partner is killed without ceremony but Khiem, more cautious, has arranged for certain facts to become public in the event of his mysterious disappearance or death.

Mister Balfour, Knox's boss, is furious but afraid Washington will discover he's been passing on phony reports for two years. With the aid of sodium pentothal they learn the name of the man with whom Khiem has made his arrangements but he is too important to kill. Where Khiem's caution might have saved him, however, his greed dooms him. He demands not only his life, sitting strapped to a swivel chair in Mister Balfour's office, but $500,000 deposited in a Hong Kong bank. Balfour decides that much money would easily buy Khiem's friend, so he fills a syringe with a lethal dose of pentothal, walks up behind Khiem and jams the needle into his kidney. "He injected all the serum, then whipped out the syringe and leaned across to whisper something in Khiem's ear, but nobody else heard what he said."

It's a dirty, sickening scene. Everything that happens in the book is repellent in much the same way. The war Trowbridge describes is a kind of huge racket. Everyone is out for himself, pursuing money or position or power. The unmistakable message of *Easy Victories* is that war corrupts and that clandestine war in someone else's country corrupts absolutely.

By the time you have finished these three books you feel a little ill. The true politics of the war were simply unspeakable. Americans acted in Vietnam with the scruples and humanity of the S.S. in the Ukraine. The whole intervention was stupid in its conception, dishonest in its motives and corrupt in its execution, an exercise of arms in an age when "arms" have come to include every conceivable refinement in the art of tormenting a population. Roth and Huggett convince you, if you still need convincing, that a military strategy based on attrition could have been devised only by men who think of men as butchers think of beef. Trowbridge convinces you that if the United States did not lose its last trace of innocence in Vietnam it was only because it had no innocence left to lose.

It is the peculiar strength of these books that you find it hard to interest

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yourself primarily in the question whether they succeed as novels. They do and they don't. They lend emotional force to political points which have nothing to do with fiction and they tell stories which never quite add up to whole novels. *Easy Victories* has the tight structure and surface polish of a syllogism with no synthesis. I do not mean simply that it ends lamely, which it does, but that the dozen strong emotions it elicits are never drawn together. They remain only fragments of some finally appropriate attitude which neither Trowbridge nor I know how to name. *Sand in the Wind* and *Body Count* reach conclusions but they are small and overly neat and they are reached only after frequent digressions into matters which are absorbing but artistically extraneous. They're good books but no one is ever going to be asked to read them in freshman English. The best way to consider them is as testimony, the affidavits of three young men who went to see for themselves. Since their talent is manifest perhaps it was a sense of decency which kept them from using what they found for the purposes of mere art.

BOOKS

THE POPES AND THE DICTATORS

GABRIEL GERSH

The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators (1922-1945)

ANTHONY RHODES

Holt, Rinehart, $10

At once spiritual and shrewd, ecumenical and parochial, timeless in strategy and often apparently time-serving in tactics, the diplomacy of the Vatican is a unique and fascinating phenomenon. Its strengths and weaknesses, consistency and anomalies were repeatedly exemplified during the period dissected by Anthony Rhodes in his *The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators (1922-1945).*

The author passes no moral judgments on papal attitudes that sometimes distressed people who lived through the anguish of those years. His purpose is to examine motives and expose facts; and this he does with discernment and clarity, drawing on material newly available from the archives of the Vatican, the British Foreign Office, and the German documents captured by the Allies in 1945. The book's merit—and its advantages over Saul Friedländer's more scholarly *Pius XII and the Third Reich*—is that it places the controversy about Pius XII and the Jews against an historical background of Vatican policy since the end of World War I.

The book covers the pontificates of Pius XI and Pius XII. Their style was very different: Pius XI was, in the words of one observer, "an obstinate, combative man" capable, in the early 1930s, of conducting a personal feud against as devout a Catholic as Lord Strickland, the Prime Minister of Malta. Pius XII, on the other hand, seems to have been retiring and a natural diplomat, with a natural diplomat's dislike of plain speech and love of comforting, if obscurely expressed, platitudes. But Vatican policy depends on more than the personality of the Pope. One of the limitations of Mr. Rhodes' book is that he confines himself largely to diplomatic history and tells us little about the structure of the Vatican administration or the rival pressures of the various groups at the papal court.

On dictatorship in general, the author observes that an authoritarian form of government cannot be completely repugnant to a pontiff who is himself an autocrat. This is an understatement of the Vatican's attitude to the first dictator with whom it had to deal. Pius XI may well have regretted his public description of Mussolini as "the man sent by Providence." But the important point for the Vatican was expressed privately by Secretary of State, Gasparri, "With such a man I knew we could do business."

The "business" was, of course, the negotiation of the Concordat of 1929 by which the Papacy became once more a territorial power. Whether such sovereignty has enhanced its spiritual authority or diplomatic influence, it was the existence of this inviolate territory that enabled the Vatican State during the war to provide an asylum that saved lives of many fugitives. And the Vatican was surely right in believing, as it did at the time, that a democratic government of Italy would not have the stable authority to make a Concordat.

To a whole generation the sight of Mr. Rhodes' title will evoke memories of the anguished dismay with which the world waited for Pius XII to denounce the Nazis. Why did he not protest against men so manifestly evil, aggression so naked, atrocities so fiendish? True, his predecessor, Pius XI, made in the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* what Mr. Rhodes calls "one of the greatest condemnations of a national regime ever pronounced by the Vatican"; but this was issued in 1937 and was directed against the Nazis' treatment of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany.

For three years after the outbreak of war, Mr. Rhodes says, the Pope, "in spite of the Nazi persecution of the churches . . . still sent cordial birthday greetings to Hitler, gave Ribbentrop presents, received high-ranking Nazi

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bosses. Nazi Germany, palpably the greatest aggressor in history, was, at least overtly, equated at the Vatican, it seemed, with Germany's enemies; they were all treated as errant nations which had somehow strayed from the straight and narrow paths of the peace."

The key to this, as the author stresses, is the Vatican's consistent principle that the interest of Catholics comes first, regardless of the rightness or wrongness of national causes. And Hitler, at the height of his conquests, ruled more than 110 million of the faithful, the largest Catholic community in the world. The Pope would do or say nothing that might inflict greater suffering upon them.

What abruptly changed his attitude was the Allies' resolve to fight until unconditional surrender, a decision which Roosevelt communicated to the Pope in September, 1942. Pius XII now realized that he must reckon with the total defeat of the Axis. In his radio address that Christmas he was more forthright than he had ever been, condemning the worship of the State and the extermination of the Jews—though mentioning no country or people by name.

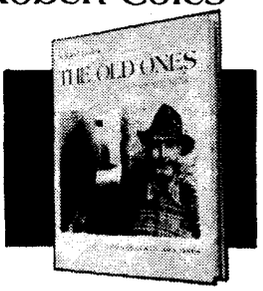
Nevertheless, the picture of Vatican diplomacy would be incomplete if it omitted the frequent contrast between public reserve and private action. While the Pope lamented that he could bring to the Jews "no help other than Our prayers," he was sheltering them in the Vatican and urging his bishops to do likewise.

The main impression which emerges from Mr. Rhodes' book is that of a highly traditional bureaucracy overtaken by an unprecedented maelstrom of events. The fact is that the traditional Vatican policy of prudent diplomatic action in the interests of the Catholic community was utterly unadapted in dealing with Hitler. Isolated within Axis Europe, lacking the means of acquiring information which would have enabled it to form realistic judgments on events, the Vatican diplomatic machine seems to have functioned in a vacuum for most of the war, generating wild miscalculations and exercising little influence.

What equally compounded the Vatican's problems were the many national Churches, whose members differed in their opinions and shared the attitudes of their non-Catholic compatriots. In Belgium and Holland most Churches were hostile to the Nazis; in France the clergy were divided; in Germany many Catholics were Nazi supporters, others resisted Nazi encroachment on the Church's rights and property, a few became committed members of the organized resistance.

These were the differences which the Vatican could not easily reflect. Given its traditions, personalities and geographical position, it is difficult to see what the Vatican could have done otherwise, and Mr. Rhodes illuminates the dimensions of its predicament, even if he does not make its policies more attractive. His book underscores a very tragic irony of history in which the highest religious authority in Europe had been slow to recognize and condemn the evil incarnate in an insane state-system, whose barbarism engulfed so much of humanity. The wartime history of the Vatican is something of a cautionary tale redeemed by the magnificent individual heroism of bishops, priests and nuns in that dark Europe and only explicable by human enslavement to self-interest, habit and hesitation.

THE OLD ONES
OF NEW MEXICO
by Robert Coles



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A God Within

RENE DUBOS

Scribners', $8.95

TALCOTT PARSONS

This is certainly a notable book. It is a kind of philosophical testament by a senior citizen of the international scientific world, who, though making a major mark in the broadly defined field of medico-biological science, has for many years been one of the most "humanistically" oriented scientists with respect to the larger cultural, social, and other settings of scientific development and endeavors.

In his extraordinarily brief Preface, Professor Dubos suggests that in the present book he has opted to deal with the problems of subjectivity and diversity in the field of life on this planet as distinguished from the primary emphasis of the scientific tradition on objectivity and uniformity. He grounds his position neatly in Greek intellectual tradition, and he adopts the title phrase from classical Greek sources, including Plato's conception of "divine madness." The body of the book is an amazingly rich set of discussions of man-environment relationships and human orientations over a

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span of very many centuries, indeed of ages.

The author's primary theme concerns the problem of the balance between human interests and activities on the one hand and the rest of the world and nature on the other. His fundamental plea is for the mobilization of human effort in the interest of a harmonization of these two fundamental concerns of human life. His ideal is clearly that of a harmonious integration between human and natural environmental interests—which he clearly believes to be intrinsically possible and feasible.

The more negative part of the theme concerns a record of the age-long attempts of men, in their drive to master nature, to exploit it. Here, Dubos is by no means temporarily parochial. He refuses emphatically to fix the blame for the exploitative tendencies exclusively on the development of modern society since the Industrial Revolution. In fact he gives very impressive examples from prehistoric times of the ways in which human adaptation has resulted in drastic deterioration of the environment, for example, deforestation in the ancient Near Eastern world.

Another impressive theme is his account of how human intervention has transformed the natural environment in a highly beneficent direction. Thus, he takes the view that the century-long development of peasant agriculture in much of Europe has in fact transformed the whole physical environment into an altogether new garden-like stance, which for a long time achieved a remarkable balance of the stability of man-nature relationships.

When he comes to the modern era, however, Dubos becomes relatively vehement in his condemnation of the ways in which very modern man has neglected the conditions of the balance. He thinks of modern industrialism as having been, in a very fundamental sense, exploitative of nature; and this conception includes not only the external environment, but the deeply based natural components of humanity

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itself, certainly at biological and psychological levels. He attributes, however, great significance to the current reactions against this type of utilitarian exploitation in favor of a many-sided movement of conservationism and human reorientation. In the mood of the critique of recent developments, Dubos is sharply critical of the current scene. At the same time he steadfastly refuses to identify himself with the prophets of doom. He is essentially the preacher of possibilities of redressing the balance and a developing in the direction of a new harmony. Most emphatically he repudiates the idea that a better balance is a function of technological regression. His view is exactly the contrary.

In matters of what might be called a kind of "philosophy of history" I would not class Dubos as a highly technical philosophical analyst. He is however a man of enormous learning and wide and long experience who is able to mobilize an immense amount of information and knowledge in a spirit of the highest humanistic wisdom. This is a very important book for contemporary intellectuals.

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The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness

ERICH FROMM

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J. DONCEEL

This work of the famous neo-analyst Erich Fromm will be welcomed by many as a wholesome reaction to the widely accepted views of some neo-instinctivists and neo-behaviorists. Psychology, which tries to study man solely from the point of view of science, must attribute all his actions either to inborn tendencies or to stimuli coming from the environment, or to a combination of both. It has no room for human freedom. The instinctivists emphasize the inborn factors, heredity, nature; the behaviorists insist upon stimulation from outside, the environment, nurture. Both groups have been around for quite awhile, but recently they have come up with refined techniques and new methods, and are now known as neo-instinctivists and neo-behaviorists. Both have done remarkable work and made interesting discoveries, especially in their study of animals. But they have also yielded to the perennial temptation of specialists: unwarranted generalization. What they have found in fish and bird, in rat and monkey, they blithely extend to man. Fromm forcefully rejects this unjustified extrapolation; he points out that it is impossible to study man as man with the methods that work so well when applied to animals. He rightly brands some of the conclusions of Konrad Lorenz, the neo-instinctivist, and of B. F. Skinner, the neo-behaviorist, as naive and simplistic.

It is especially against Lorenz that he takes up the cudgels. Man is influenced by instincts or organic drives, rooted in his physiological needs. But, unlike animals, he is mainly impelled by human passions, rooted in his character, deriving from his existential needs. Fromm accepts part of what Lorenz tells us about aggressive behavior in animals. But he rejects Lorenz' contention that their aggressive drive operates whether or not it be stimulated by outside objects. He refutes Lorenz' "hydraulic" conception of animal aggressivity, which holds that, as water accumulates against a dam and builds up a steadily increasing pressure, so the aggressive drive would slowly grow in the animal until it discovers some outlet. Lorenz adds that among animals this aggression for aggression's sake is not harmful because it is counteracted and held in check by another instinct that restrains the animal from killing a foe of his own species, as soon as the latter shows signs of submission. However, with man the picture changes. His lethal weapons have become appallingly powerful, they work more and more at a distance, so that the aggressor no longer sees the victim, who will in vain grovel and plead for mercy.

Even if man were merely an animal this frightening theory would not be true. Animal aggressivity does not periodically build up like hunger or sex. It is a response to the environment, it operates when a vital need is threatened. Except among the predators, who have to kill in order to live, animal aggression is "benign." "If the human species had approximately the same degree of 'innate' aggressivesness as that of chimpanzees living in their natural habitat, we would live in a rather peaceful world." (103) Fromm brings up a huge amount of data from neurophysiology, animal psychology, paleontology and anthropology in order to challenge the pessimistic conclusion of Lorenz. He establishes decisively that man does not possess an inborn, self-feeding and self-propelling aggressive drive.

Fromm devotes less space to the neo-behaviorism of B. F. Skinner. While admiring Skinner's achievements as an engineer of animal behavior, he

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berates him for the fuzziness he displays when, leaving the laboratory, he tries to apply his methods to human society. Skinner implicitly uses the values which he denies explicitly. He is "a naive rationalist who ignores man's passion" (40), and for whom egotism or selfishness is the only basic motive of man. By ignoring the person and paying attention only to behavior Skinner and his followers easily misread the data they have so skillfully collected. The author illustrates his assertions by thoroughly discussing two famous experiments on human aggression (Milgram and Zimbardo) and showing how ambiguous their results are. When the topic under consideration is as complex as human aggression and cruelty, scientific experimentation becomes utterly artificial and its results easily lead the unwary astray.

Benign aggression is inborn in animals and in man; it is triggered by threats to their vital interests. It does not constitute much of a problem or a danger. Quite different is the case with "malignant" aggression, which is not inborn, nor biologically adaptive, and which occurs only in man. Not in all men nor in all cultures, but often enough to constitute a serious threat to individuals and society. Fromm shows that malignant aggression is rooted in man's existential needs, as they interact with his social environment. He discusses these needs, he studies the various passions which sway man's conduct and the physiological and social conditions of their development, thus setting the stage for a remarkable study of malignant aggression in its main manifestations: cruelty, destructiveness and necrophilia, and in some of its most famous historical embodiments: Stalin, Himmler and Hitler. The Führer is masterfully portrayed, in a 60-page chapter, as a typical example of nonsexual necrophilia, the pure passion to destroy and to kill.

This book is the first volume of a wider work on psychoanalytic theory. It contains many references to Freud's ideas, to their development and to the author's own important contributions to theoretical and practical psychoanalysis. It is more than a study of

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

REVIEWERS

GABRIEL GERSH recently edited and translated a collection of D'Annunzio's essays.

TALCOTT PARSONS, a religious sociologist at Harvard, co-authored, with Gerald M. Platt, *The American University*.

FATHER JOSEPH DONCEEL, S.J., teaches philosophy at Fordham University.

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human aggression, it is almost a "treatise on human nature," covering as it does most aspects of man's existence.

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The reader becomes soon aware that this is the work of a philosopher and of a humanist, who knows man for having spent a lifetime studying him and all his vagaries, as a practician in the office, as a scholar in the great works of philosophy and literature, as an openminded man in daily life. It is illustrated by many case studies, a couple of which turn into remarkable psychobiographies.

The hasty reader may sometimes find the going a bit slow. But Fromm is always worth reading, even when he indulges in what may look like a detour. His book ends on a note of cautious optimism. Both benign and malignant aggression may be reduced, if we can change the socio-economic conditions which feed them. The author says that this optimism must be based on faith and he declares that it looks for some kind of salvation. However, this faith and salvation are not those of a believer but of a humanist. Here lies, to my mind, the weakness of this remarkable book. Fromm ignores the positive aspects of man's deepest existential need, the need for God. Against every form of naive reductionism he has solidly established that man is more than an animal. There are those who hold (and I count myself among them) that man can really be more than an animal if he accepts to be more than a man.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 27)

Can they fill the air with smog enough?
Their rivers with Pollutions?
Are their citizens evolved enough
For mental institutions?
Are they ripe enough to know enough
To regulate their taxes.
So the poor can pay the rich
To keep the poor flat on their axes?
Do they know how to destroy
What they produce for their enjoyment?
Or employ enough machines
To keep employees from employment?
Have the natives the intelligence,
Native wisdom or dexterity,
To establish atom bases
As the base of their prosperity?
In essence, have we morally
The right to even plan
To let the backward nations
Join the Brotherhood of Man?

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Your obedient servant,
RICHARD L. GROSSMAN

Sneak Previews

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Bruce Cook's provincialism is showing ["Movies You Don't Get a Chance to See," Feb. 15]. He says a friend "swears" to have seen "The Night of the Following Day" in 1969 in Columbia, Mo. Well, I saw it in Trenton, N.J., about the same time. (Take my word for it, don't make me swear.)

It is a fairly well known practice for movie companies to open some films outside Manhattan, and I guess some just never make it to the Big Apple.

Another example of this practice: "Payday," which I touted to one of my friends as a good flick that probably would never get to the boonies, where he lived; he told me he'd seen the film at home a year earlier.

All this in no way meant to knock the whole premise of Cook's piece, just to teach him not to doubt a friend.

CAROLE MARTIN

Meltable Ethnics

Red Bank, N.J.

To the Editors: Michael Novak's week after week dissertations on ethnic differences makes one wonder whether he is aware of the real differences in people.

There are people of thought, people of action and people of emotions. People who when faced with a crisis are inclined either to (a) flee; (b) fight or (c) negotiate. People who react to

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stress by (a) withdrawal; (b) action or (c) socialization.

I am an Irish Catholic who is inclined to think, flee and withdraw. My kinsmen are similar Italians, Poles, Jews, Armenians or Chinese. They are closer to me than the Irish Catholic football player who lives next door to me, or the Irish Catholic politician up the road.

As Huxley pointed out in his "perennial philosophy" I am a Buddhist Catholic, as others are Buddhist Protestants or Buddhist Jews.

Articles such as Mr. Novak turns out divert readers from attempts to find out who they really are. Life, as Ortega pointed out, is a continual struggle to become in fact what you are in design. Being ethnic has little to do with that basic design.

GEORGE SHEEHAN, M.D.

Sydney, Cape Breton, Canada

To the Editors: I am not sure just where Michael Novak is going with this constant question of ethnicity. Nor do I have data to question his data in "the country that wasn't there" [Jan. 11].

However, from an impressionistic point of view, I should like to point out that if the percentage of Italians, Slavs, Irish and Blacks is very low among top corporation officers, the percentage of top corporation officers among Wasps—or among anyone in North American society—is probably very low. There is very little room at the top in an elitist society.

Some of my own Wasp ancestors moved out of Appalachia as early as the 1890s. I do not think they were seeking their fortune, which is just as well, since they haven't found it.

A better indicator might be how well people do in the schools, the prime instrument of selectivity for lower levels in our vertical mosaic. On this basis—say a dropout index—one might get a somewhat different picture.

Some three years ago a survey was done on school achievement in Toronto. This of course is not in the United States, (and hopefully Canada is different). The survey was done to determine to what extent immigrants are discriminated against in the school system. The results are fairly complex, but indicate no significant ethnic discrimination and a consistent social discrimination, with working-class "old Canadians" (Wasps?) at the bottom of the heap. Of language groups the most consistently high school achievers were the Chinese, the lowest French-speaking Canadians. For *most* ethnics, achievements seemed to correlate better with social status and income than with any ethnic criterion.

In any event, it would be interesting to have some comment from Mr. Novak on the exclusion of Wasps from private foundations, corporations, universities and other major institutions, and the number of Wasps who live below the poverty line. Up here at least we are told that a few hundred families, mostly Wasp, occupy the key places in the economy. But we have a few million Wasps who do not.

JORDAN BISHOP

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